

Message Text

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RAMSTEIN FOR AMBASSADOR TOON

BELGRADE FOR USDEL, CSCE

E.O. 11652: NA
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SUBJECT: US-USSR WRITERS' CONFERENCE

REF: (A) STATE 143235, (B) SOFIA 1269

1. SUMMARY: SOVIET-AMERICAN WRITERS' CONFERENCE OPENED
IN MOSCOW JUNE 28. OPENING REMARKS BY JOURNAL OF FOREIGN
LITERATURE EDITOR WERE ESSENTIALLY REPEAT OF POINTS MADE
ELSEWHERE. EMBOFF WAS TOLD TO LEAVE CONFERENCE AFTER OPENING
SESSION AND LUNCHEON AND HAS NOT YET BEEN PERMITTED TO
REJOIN AMERICAN GROUP, DESPITE PERSONAL REQUESTS FROM
COUSINS TO FEDORENKO. EMBASSY HAS RAISED MATTER
WITH MFA. END SUMMARY.

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2. JOURNAL OF FOREIGN LITERATURE EDITOR NIKOLAI T.
FEDORENKO OPENED LONG-PLANNED SOVIET-AMERICAN
WRITER'S CONFERENCE AT UNION OF WRITERS IN MOSCOW
JUNE 28 WITH 45 MINUTE SPEECH FROM PREPARED TEXT.
AFTER SAYING THAT SOVIETS VIEWED THIS CONFERENCE AS
CONTINUATION OF RECENTLY-COMPLETED SOFIA MEETING (SEE

REF B), FEDORENKO REPEATED USUAL SOVIET LINE CRITICIZING WEST AND ESPECIALLY US FOR NOT PUBLISHING MORE WORKS OF SOVIET AUTHORS WHILE USSR HAS TRANSLATED AND PUBLISHED CLASSICS OF AMERICAN LITERATURE AS WELL AS CONTEMPORARY WRITERS SUCH AS MAILER, CHEEVER, OATES, VONNEGUT, ETC. IN SUPPORTING HIS ARGUMENT FEDORENKO REPEATED USUAL STATISTICS ON NUMBER OF TITLES AND COPIES PUBLISHED. FEDORENKO HAD PARTICULARLY HARSH WORDS FOR US PUBLISHING COMMUNITY'S INTEREST IN AND ATTENTION TO WORKS OF "SO-CALLED DISSIDENT WRITERS" WHOSE "SCRIBBLINGS HAVE BEEN PUBLISHED WIDELY WITHOUT REGARD TO QUESTIONS OF LITERARY STYLE." FEDORENKO WENT ON TO SAY THAT US READING PUBLIC'S VIEW OF USSR IS FORMED BY THIS "TRASH", WORKS OF AMERICAN WRITERS SUCH AS GEORGE FEIFER, AND BY HEDRICK SMITH'S "CONTENTIOUS" BOOK, "THE RUSSIANS." FEDORENKO POINTED OUT TO AMERICAN PARTICIPANTS THAT SOVIET UNION HAD MARKED AMERICAN BICENTENNIAL WITH, INTER ALIA, AN ISSUE OF JOURNAL OF FOREIGN LITERATURE DEVOTED LARGELY TO AMERICAN LIT. FEDORENKO EXPRESSED HOPE THAT US WOULD RESPOND BY NOTING THE SIXTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF OCTOBER REVOLUTION WHICH, HE SAID, WOULD BE CELEBRATED THROUGHOUT WORLD AS EVENT OF GREAT HISTORIC SIGNIFICANCE. FEDORENKO REPEATEDLY REFERRED TO CSCE AND HELSINKI DURING COURSE OF HIS REMARKS, SAYING THAT POOR US PERFORMANCE IN AREA OF PUBLISHING SOVIET LITERATURE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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REPRESENTED FAILURE TO FULFILL PROVISIONS OF CSCE AGREEMENT AND THAT IT IS WRITERS' SPECIAL RESPONSIBILITY TO WORK FOR PEACE AND TO EXPAND MUTUAL UNDERSTANDING.

3. IN HIS RESPONSE, US DELEGATION HEAD NORMAN COUSINS EMPHASIZED THAT AMERICANS, TOO, WANT PEACE AND ACKNOWLEDGED THAT WRITERS, AS SOURCES OF ENERGY AND IDEAS FOR SOCIETIES, DO HAVE SPECIAL RESPONSIBILITY IN THIS AREA. COUSINS REMINDED SOVIETS THAT AMERICAN PUBLISHERS RESPOND TO MARKET AND CITED RECENT GROWTH IN AMERICAN PUBLIC INTEREST IN LITERATURE OF USSR DUE LARGELY, COUSINS SAID, TO EFFORTS OF AMERICAN COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES IN THIS AREA. COUSINS EMPHASIZED US SIDE'S INTEREST IN DISCUSSING PROSPECTS FOR INCREASING LITERARY CONTACTS AND EXCHANGES IN ORDER TO EXPAND AMOUNT OF LITERATURE WHICH IS PUBLISHED IN TRANSLATION AND MAJOR CONCERNS AND INTERESTS OF WRITERS IN SOCIETY.

4. FOLLOWING OPENING STATEMENTS, MEETING ADJOURNED FOR LONG LUNCH BREAK. DURING AND AFTER LUNCH, EMBOFF (ACAO/EXCHANGES) WAS TOLD INDIVIDUALLY BY

THREE REPS OF JOURNAL OF FOREIGN LIT. AND UNION OF WRITERS IN THREE DIFFERENT VERSIONS THAT USSR MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS HAD SAID EMBOFF SHOULD NOT BE PRESENT FOR MEETINGS. (EMBOFF HAD BEEN INVITED ORALLY TO ATTEND BY JOURNAL OF FOREIGN LIT STAFF MEMBERS.) TWO OF THOSE WHO TOLD EMBOFF OF THIS EXPRESSED REGRET AT DECISION AND ONE CAST DOUBT ON WHETHER THERE WAS IN FACT A CALL FROM MFA TO FEDORENKO, AS EMBOFF WAS TOLD, OR WHETHER DECISION WAS FEDORENKO'S OWN WHICH HE HAS TRIED TO PRESENT AS BEING RESULT OF INSTRUCTION. BEFORE DEPARTING, EMBOFF TOLD COUSINS OF REQUEST THAT HE LEAVE. COUSINS CHALLENGED FEDORENKO ON IT, EMPHASIZING EMBASSY'S AND DEPARTMENT'S CONTRIBUTION TO SETTING UP MEETING. FEDORENKO TOLD COUSINS JUNE 28 LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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THAT HE WOULD PASS HIS REQUEST TO MFA. ON MORNING OF JUNE 29, FEDORENKO TOLD COUSINS "MFA HAD NOT RESPONDED TO REQUEST" THAT EMBOFF BE READMITTED. COUSINS CALLED EMB EARLY AFTERNOON JUNE 29 TO REPORT THAT HE, ON BEHALF OF US DELEGATION, HAD EXPRESSED DISPLEASURE OF AMERICAN DELEGATION OVER FEDORENKO'S "ARBITRARY ATTITUDE" CONCERNING EXCLUSION OF EMBOFF FROM MEETING. FEDORENKO REPEATED THAT HE WAS ACTING ON INSTRUCTIONS FROM MFA. COUSINS AGAIN CALLED ON FEDORENKO TO SEEK REVERSAL. ACTING P&C COUNSELOR TELEPHONED AZAROV, MFA CULTURAL DIVISION US DESK OFFICER, LATE JUNE 29 TO INQUIRE RE REASONS FOR EMBOFF'S EXCLUSION. AZAROV DENIED HAVING ANY KNOWLEDGE OF SITUATION. EMBASSY THEN ALSO RAISED MATTER WITH MFA USA DIVISION DEPUTY CHIEF FEDOSEYEV JUNE 29 AND IS AWAITING RESPONSE.

5. EMBOFF LEARNED FROM SOVIET AND AMERICAN PARTICIPANTS THAT JUNE 28 AFTERNOON SESSION BROUGHT PROPOSAL BY VERA DUNHAM FOR ESTABLISHMENT OF COOPERATION IN AREA OF LITERARY TRANSLATION AND HARANGUE BY SOVIET AUTHOR YURI BONDAREV ON PORNOGRAPHY IN WEST. ANOTHER SOVIET PARTICIPANT LATER DESCRIBED BONDAREV'S SPEECH TO EMBOFF AS A "BAD, UNFORTUNATE, STUPID THING WHICH WAS COMPLETELY OUT OF PLACE." IN IT BONDAREV CRITICIZED AMERICAN AND WEST GERMAN WRITERS OF BEING "PANDERERS OF PORNOGRAPHY." IN REPLY, COUSINS IS REPORTED TO HAVE RESPONDED HOTLY, POINTING OUT THAT WESTERN DEFINITION OF PORNOGRAPHY IS SOMEWHAT DIFFERENT AND THAT PEOPLE IN WEST FIND SUPPRESSION, FOR EXAMPLE, PORNOGRAPHIC. MATLOCK

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